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San Juan SKYWAY

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DRIVE IN AMERICA



SAN JUAN AND UNCOMPAHGRE
NATIONAL FORESTS





Travel to the top of the world and back in time on the SAN JUAN SKYWAY. Colorado's first National Forest Scenic Byway. This loop trip through the San Juan Mountains of Southwest Colorado has been called "The most beautiful drive in America". The 236-mile route follows state-maintained highways on a journey through towering mountains and mining towns to the rolling vistas and ancient ruins of Indian country. View stunning National Forest scenery from your vehicle or pull off at points of interest and fill your camera with beautiful memories.

Drive through the heart of 5 million acres of the San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests. Learn the history behind quaint mountain towns. Relax at roadside campgrounds or hike well-maintained trails.

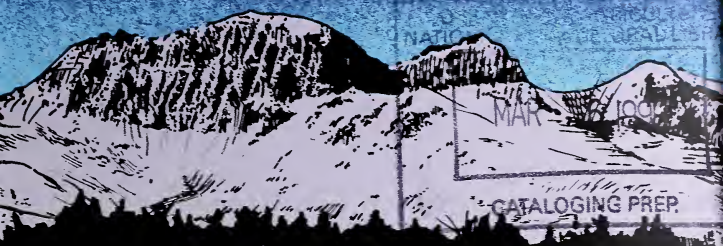
DURANGO

Durango is an "Old West" town that still depends upon the historic Narrow Gauge Train for its livelihood. Restored historic landmarks like the Strater, General Palmer and Jarvis Suite Hotels line downtown streets. Founded in 1880 as a bustling rail center to serve the booming mining industry, Durango still retains its Victorian charm. Nearby is the Southern Ute Indian Reservation.



MARONA





Explore mining roads by four wheel drive or try out the new sport of mountain biking. Fish, raft and kayak pure mountain waters. Experience a hunting season like no other or snap an award-winning wildlife photograph. Soak your cares away in historic hot spring pools.

Whatever your fancy, a drive on the SAN JUAN SKY-WAY is full of adventure. The trip can be made in one day or several. Be sure to leave time to take in the side attractions...like Mesa Verde National Park and the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Train. Summer and early fall offer the best weather and scenery. We'll begin this guided tour in Durango, but you can actually start the trip from any location along the loop.



BARKER

ANIMAS VALLEY

Head north out of Durango and up into the San Juan National Forest. Historic mineral hot springs at Trimble Lane are open to the public year-round. The valley features pastoral landscapes and the steep red rock Hermosa Cliffs.



MARONA



MARONA

HAVILAND LAKE

Enjoy a picnic or fish for rainbow trout in this easily accessible spot offering National Forest camping and beautiful scenery.

COAL BANK AND MOLAS PASS

These consecutive mountain passes top 10,000 feet in elevation, revealing dramatic alpine scenery. The Needle Mountains in the Weminuche Wilderness feature several of Colorado's tallest peaks ("Fourteeners"). The Colorado Trail traverses the rugged backcountry, connecting Durango to Denver.

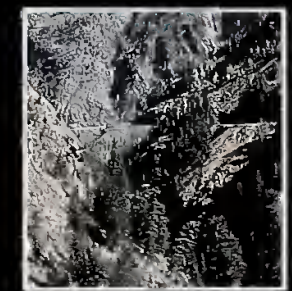
Silverton is a living mining town tucked in a high mountain valley. This National Historic Landmark features quaint shops at the end of the line for the famous Narrow Gauge Railroad which originates in Durango. Hardrockers' Holidays, Brass Band Festival, four wheeling and hiking are highlights. Victorian lodging or local campgrounds available.



FUGE

This famous section of the SKYWAY runs along part of an historic toll road built by Otto Mears, the "Pathfinder of the San Juans". This incredible stretch of road winds through the iron-colored "Red Mountains", along the sheer sides of the Uncompahgre Gorge, through tunnels and above cascading waterfalls. The Bear Creek National Recreation Trail climbs up from the highway to the cliffs above.

MILLION DOLLAR HIGHWAY



WINGLE

This historic railroad town was used as the film location for old western movies like "True Grit" and "How The West Was Won". The area features Dallas Reservoir/State Park, Owl Creek Pass and Big Blue Wilderness. Just north (off the SKYWAY) is Montrose, home of the Ute Indian Museum and gateway to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument.

RIDGWAY

PURGATORY

Purgatory Ski Area is known for powder snow and abundant sunshine. Summer attractions include an alpine slide, tennis, horseback riding, swimming and lodging with nearby camping on the National Forest.

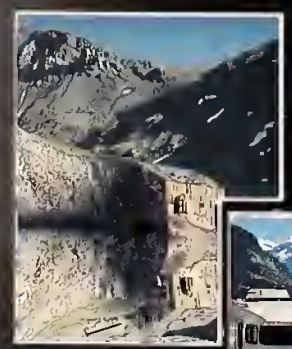


PEHA

SILVERTON

RED MOUNTAIN PASS

Travel the highest paved pass in the San Juan Mountains at 11,075 feet. Ghost towns dot the area where some of the most profitable mining ventures in the world took place. Here, the SKYWAY passes onto the Uncompahgre National Forest.



FUGE



PEHA

OURAY



NORRIS-COOK

Ouray is an alpine village surrounded on all sides by towering mountains. Victorian shops, restaurants and hotels line downtown streets. Box Canyon Falls features a plummeting waterfall in a deep cave-like canyon. Historic hot spring pools are open year-round. Four-wheel-drive roads lead to gold and silver mines. Scenic campgrounds abound.



MCMURRAY

DALLAS DIVIDE

This drive offers a spectacular view of the 14,000-foot-plus peaks of the Mt. Sneffels Wilderness. This rugged range is the backdrop for enchanting mountain ranchland. Dallas Divide offers a breathtaking journey up through the National Forest.

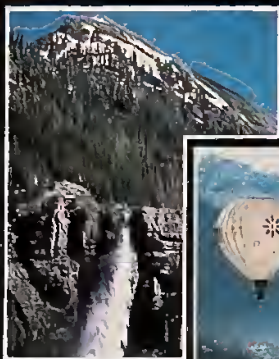
MOLAS LAKES

Camping, fishing and picnicking are found in spectacular settings with nearby trailheads leading into the National Forest.



LIZARD HEAD PASS

The SKYWAY again tops 10,000 feet in elevation with spectacular views of high mountains and alpine meadows. Trails lead from roadside picnic grounds into the Lizard Head Wilderness named after the remaining rock spire of "Lizard Head Peak". Historic Markers tell the story of the famous Rio Grande Southern Railroad which traveled this route until 1952. The SKYWAY passes back onto the San Juan National Forest which features the popular Barlow Creek/Bolam Pass four-wheel-drive road.



WAIDHOFER

ELLZEY



WINGLE

TELLURIDE

This Victorian mining town founded in the late 1800's is now a famous international ski resort. Telluride is the place where Butch Cassidy began his notorious career. The infamous bankrobber held up his first bank here on June 24, 1889. Today the historic downtown lends the perfect setting for year-round shopping and lodging. Seasonal festivals feature Bluegrass & Country Music, Jazz, International Films, Wine and Balloons, and Hang Gliding. Four-wheel-drive roads lead to historic mining towns.

OPHIR

This tiny historic town is named after King Solomon's Mines. Towering peaks, waterfalls and rugged cliffs line the SKYWAY. The famous Ames Power Plant which generated the world's first alternating electric current is located in the San Miguel Valley below. Scenic campgrounds and exciting four-wheel-drive roads are nearby on the National Forest.

TROUT LAKE

A "picture perfect" high elevation lake surrounded by the splendor of mountain meadows and goliath peaks. Enjoy fishing, picnicking and boating in a unique setting.



Rico was once connected to civilization only by wagon train along the historic Scotch Creek toll road. The route is now popular for hiking, mountain biking and four wheeling.

RICO

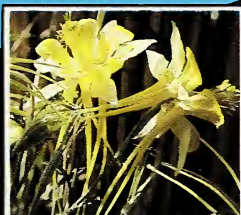
ANASAZI HERITAGE CENTER



The Center is located four miles south of Dolores on Highway 147. This museum depicts ancient Indian life and the Escalante-Dominguez Expedition of 1776. The ruins, artifacts and high quality exhibits are open year-round to the public.

DOLORES

The Rio Grande Southern "Galloping Goose" railcar is on display here. This unique piece of history is part train, bus and car. Dolores is the gateway to McPhee Reservoir which boasts high quality fishing, boating, picnicking and camping.



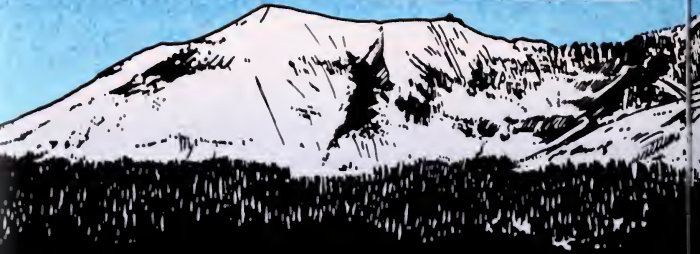
FUGE

DOLORES RIVER VALLEY

The SKYWAY follows the Dolores River through meadows dotted with farms, ranches and great fishing spots. Four-wheel-drive roadstake off into the National Forest.



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MESA VERDE NATIONAL PARK

Mesa Verde is the only National Park dedicated solely to the works of man. These cliff dwellings were mysteriously abandoned by the Anasazi Indians 200 years before Columbus discovered America. Mesa Verde offers guided tours, museum exhibits, camping, lodging and restaurants.



MARONA

CORTEZ

Cortez is known as the "Archeological Center of the U.S.". Just south is Four Corners Monument, the only spot in the nation where you can stand in four states at once. Cortez offers a mild climate, golf and the nearby Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation at the base of the "Sleeping Ute Mountain".



ON

MANCOS

Nestled in the beautiful Mancos Valley, this agricultural community was home to the famous Weatherill family, founders of the Mesa Verde cliff dwellings. The Dominguez-Escalante Memorial Highway (CO 184) takes off the SKYWAY and retraces portions of that historic trek.



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HESPERUS

Hesperus is the gateway to La Plata Canyon. This steep-sided, dead-end canyon is rich in mining history from the late 1800's and still produces gold and silver today. Four-wheel-drive roads and hiking trails lead into the San Juan National Forest.

This tour guide is sponsored by the San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests as a public service. Designed as a day trip or weekend jaunt, we hope it will help you discover a special part of your National Forests, America's Great Outdoors.

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